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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education have attempted to diversity their faculty by recruiting women and minorities. However, recruitment has taken place without an understanding of the social forces that shape the professional socialization and workplace satisfaction of women and minority faculty. Conclusions drawn by the author about the plight of women and minority faculty in the academic workplace include: (1) The number of women and minority faculty in higher education has been increasing though they remain underrepresented in higher education relative to their numbers in the U.S. population; (2) The academic workplace has been described as chilly and alienating for women and minority faculty because they are ascribed a peripheral role in the academic workplace and are expected to perform roles that are in conflict with expectations; (3) Women and minority faculty are less satisfied than White male faculty with the workplace because they perceive themselves to be victims of salary inequities and a biased reward system; and (4) Women and minority faculty are also perceived as less competent than White male faculty. As a result, White male faculty often discredit feminist and minority research. (Contains 15 references.) (PW)

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Women and Minority Faculty in the Academic Workplace: Recruitment, Retention, and Academic Culture

Adalberto Aguirre, Jr.

Institutions of higher education have attempted to diversify their faculty by recruiting women and minorities. Those efforts, however, have been implemented without understanding how women and minority faculty fit in an institution dominated by men, especially White men. In particular, recruitment has taken place without an understanding of the social forces that shape the professional socialization and workplace satisfaction of women and minority faculty. The use of affirmative action in academia to increase the representation of women and minority faculty, for example, has often resulted in workers' perception that they are tokens or outcomes of reverse discrimination practiced on White men (Delgado, 1991; Niemann, 1999).

By no means is the term *minority faculty* in this monograph used to identify a homogeneous population. Rather, the term is used as a descriptive category to discuss the workplace experiences of non-White faculty. As such, the term minority faculty includes Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and American Indians. It is not possible to examine the workplace experiences of each minority group, given the limits of the research literature. In particular, the research literature on minority faculty focuses primarily on the experiences of Latinos and Blacks. The research literature does not so much omit Asian and American Indian faculty from study as it recognizes its limitations in making substantive comparisons between minority groups (Pavel et al., 1998; Yen, 1996). That is, more information is simply available on Black and Latino faculty than on Asian or American Indian faculty. As a result, comparisons between the groups run the risk of being conceptually weak, given a lack of data and information for some of the groups. In an attempt to address the need for substantive comparisons in the minority faculty population, this monograph examines the relative differences between minority groups in the faculty population when the data permit comparisons.

The term *women faculty*, on the one hand, is a descriptive category that includes women's experiences in the workplace. The term is used to discuss and contrast the academic

experiences of women and men faculty in the workplace. On the other hand, the term is not homogeneous in its use; in particular, the term is not designed to bury the workplace experiences of minority women faculty. To this end, the workplace experiences of minority and White women faculty are compared and contrasted to identify commonalities and differences between them. In this manner, the understanding of how minority status and gender are associated with the workplace experiences of minority women faculty is enhanced (Aguirre et al., 1994; Calasanti & Smith, 1998).

What Is the Status of Women and Minority Faculty in Academia?

The number of women and minority faculty in higher education has been increasing, with the implementation of affirmative action initiatives in higher education serving as a vehicle for increasing their representation. Despite the increased numbers, however, women and minority faculty remain underrepresented in higher education relative to their numbers in the U.S. population. Moreover, despite appreciable gains in the number of Ph.D. degrees earned by women and minorities, their proportionate representation in the U.S. faculty population has remained unchanged (Aguirre, 1995; Granger, 1993).

What Are the Organizational Features of the Academic Workplace?

The academic workplace is characterized in popular thinking as a place of enlightened thought and discourse that is immune to influences from the outside world. Its perceived immunity to the outside world has resulted in a perception that the academic workplace is free of conflict and stress. The reality, however, is that the academic workplace is characterized by group struggles over the definition of knowledge and about what it means to be a knowledgeable person. To survive in the academic workplace, faculty members must align themselves with and participate in institutional networks that define one's position in a knowledge hierarchy (Scheff, 1995; Smith, 1990).

How are Women and Minority Faculty Treated in the Academic Workplace?

The academic workplace has been described as chilly and alienating for women and minority faculty. On the one hand, women and minority faculty find themselves burdened with heavy teaching and service responsibilities



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that constrain their opportunity to engage in research and publication. On the other hand, women and minority faculty are expected to assume and perform institutional roles that allow higher education institutions to pursue diversity on campus. But those roles are ignored in the faculty reward system, especially the awarding of tenure. The academic workplace is thus chilly and alienating for women and minority faculty because they are ascribed a peripheral role in the academic workplace and are expected to perform roles that are in conflict with expectations (Johnsrud & Des Jarlais, 1994; Wyche & Graves, 1992).

What Barriers to Professional Socialization Do Women and Minority Faculty Experience in the Academic Workplace?

Women and minority faculty are less satisfied than White male faculty with the workplace because women and minority faculty perceive themselves to be the victims of salary inequities and a biased reward system. Women and minority faculty are also perceived in the academic workplace as less competent than White male faculty. As a result, White male faculty often discredit feminist and minority research. Women and minority faculty face barriers in the academic workplace that question their legitimacy as academics and their access to institutional resources and rewards that promote professional socialization (Aguirre, 1987; Johnsrud, 1993).

Why Do We Need to Study the Academic Workplace for Women and Minority Faculty?

An examination of the academic workplace for women and minority faculty becomes imperative if one considers that demographic predictions suggest that the U.S. workforce will become increasingly diverse in the 21st century. The two populations most likely to determine diversity in the workplace in the 21st century are women and minorities. An increased representation of women and minorities in the workplace has implications for institutions of higher education, especially at a time when it appears that faculty pools are shrinking as the demand for new faculty is increasing. As a result, one may speculate that women and minorities will increase their representation in the faculty population, thus providing institutions of higher education with an enhanced opportunity to diversify their faculty ranks. If women and minority faculty are going to increase their representativeness in higher education, it is necessary to examine the academic workplace to understand how women and minority faculty fit in the academic culture (Aguirre, 2000).

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